



MEPRA



**2021 MEPRA
Executive Board Nominees**

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee



Souad
Jamal AlSerkal

Souad Jamal AlSerkal, Vice President of Corporate Communications at Tabreed, possess an extensive experience in PR, government relations and corporate communications. She holds a Master's degree in Sciences of International Business Administration and a Bachelor's degree in Communication and Media Sciences.

In her role at Tabreed, AlSerkal orchestrated communication strategies in turn reflecting on brand positioning, brand profitability and market share. She oversees programs that promote the company's experts and executive management to the public and internal activities that drive employee engagement and position the communications department as an integral component of the business cycle.

AlSerkal's 14 years of experience had her working at Abu Dhabi Media, Al Tayer Group, Sheikh Mohammed Center for Cultural Understanding, Dubai International Film Festival and Arab Media Group.

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee



Khaled
AlShehhi

Khaled AlShehhi is the Executive Director of Marketing and Communications at the UAE Government Media Office in the UAE Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, and the Marketing Director at The Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives. He oversees and develops strategic plans and policies to increase the digital influence and outreach of various initiatives and projects with local, regional and global dimensions. His efforts in digital communications of government initiatives contribute to strengthening the UAE's reputation as an incubator for pioneering developmental, humanitarian, and cultural and knowledge projects.

AlShehhi has an extensive experience in developing digital communication policies and marketing strategies. He managed the digital campaigns of the Emirates Nation Brand - Impossible Is Possible, The Emirates Mars Mission "Hope Probe" launch, The World's tallest donation box, 10 million meals, Arab Reading Challenge, Arab Hope Makers, the 2017 "Year of Giving", the 2016 "Year of Reading", the "World Government Summit" in 2016 and 2017 and other national projects.

AlShehhi was named the "Digital Professional of the Year" 2020 by The Public Relations and Communications Association (PRCA MENA) and Marketing Game Changer 2020 by Campaign Middle East. He is also a graduate from the Mohammed bin Rashid Center for Leadership Development's 'Impactful Leaders Program'

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee



Jon Barber

Jon Barber is a senior communications specialist with experience in Government and Private industry throughout the Middle East.

Mr. Barber has over 20 years' experience in the Middle East and Western Europe. A Broadcast Journalist graduate of Nottingham Trent University, he spent more than 10 years with the BBC as a news and sport journalist.

For the past decade he has worked in Dubai and Abu Dhabi as a leading communicator for many of the UAE's most notable brands including Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, DAMAC Properties, Dubai World Trade Centre and most recently ACWA Power – a private developer, owner and operator of power generation and desalinated water production plants. He is now the Vice President Communications for ADNOC Distribution.



Ray
Eglington

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee

Ray Eglington is a founding partner of Four Communications Group, the leading integrated communications agency with more than 370 staff in offices in the UK and Middle East. He has run Four's MENA operations since 2005, leading teams in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Riyadh.

With more than 30 years of in-house and agency PR experience, Ray's skills lie in strategic brand positioning, integrated campaign development, and crisis & issues management.

Ray has won many awards for his campaigns, including the PR Week Grand Prix, the IPR Sword of Excellence, PRCA Outstanding Consultancy Practice Awards, Sabre Awards and numerous MEPRA awards. Four is the current Large Agency of the Year in the Middle East.

Ray sits on the Group Board and the Executive Committee of Four Communications Group, as well as the Group's specialist practice management boards. He was Chair of the Middle East Public Relations Association in 2017 and 2018, a period which saw the trade association develop its largest ever membership, its widest range of activities and its most successful financial performance. He is also Chair of Greencombe Limited, a UK-based park homes business.

Before starting Four, Ray was a main board director at Charles Barker BSMG Worldwide, the UK's sixth-largest agency, and before that, he held positions as a director at Countrywide Porter Novelli and as European public relations manager for Sabre / American Airlines.

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee



Margaret
Flanagan

As Chief Strategy Officer, Margaret is responsible for communications strategy development and implementation across all Practices in the UAE, as well in key overseas markets.

Margaret joined ASDA'A BCW in 2009 as Associate Director of Strategy before taking on the role of Director of the Consumer & Healthcare practice in 2010. In 2013, she was appointed Managing Director of Brand Communications and Deputy Lead for EMEA Brand Marketing for Burson-Marsteller.

While at ASDA'A BCW she has worked on government, corporate and consumer campaigns and crisis and issues management for brands and organisations including ADNOC, Dubai Tourism, evian, Ford, Lufthansa, Nestlé, and for a number of GCC government ministries. She also managed a regional healthcare portfolio.

Prior to joining the agency, Margaret was director for the Gulf for UK agency Four Communications, representing clients including Nakheel, Abu Dhabi Department of Transport and the Bahrain Economic Development Board. Margaret previously worked at the agency's London HQ.

Margaret enjoyed a brief stint in TV broadcasting as a runner for the popular live morning show, Big Breakfast, on the UK's Channel Four. She has a First Class Bachelor's degree in journalism from the London College of Printing.



Sameh
Hamtini

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee

A Public Affairs specialist, Sameh Hamtini is the Executive Vice President – Middle East of ASDA'A BCW, based in Dubai. He is responsible for strengthening the Agency's growth across government and corporate sectors, especially in Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia.

With over 20 years of experience as a senior communications leader, Sameh has in-depth international and regional expertise in strategy development, public affairs consultancy for governments, corporate communications, crisis management and new business development.

Sameh has proven experience in planning, managing and implementing compelling PR strategies and initiatives that are aligned with organisational business goals and objectives. He is an ASDA'A BCW veteran, who was previously EVP-Regional Operations, before he took up a short-term strategic assignment for the government to advise on Abu Dhabi's media strategy.

Having grown up in the UAE, Sameh has a deep understanding of the Khaleeji (Gulf) culture. His Jordanian roots also add to his ability to connect easily in this highly diverse region. A proficient Arabic writer with strong regional media relationships, Sameh cut his teeth as a business journalist in Jordan and Dubai before moving to the PR industry.

Sameh has a Bachelor's degree in Journalism and Mass Communications from the Al Yarmouk University in Jordan, where he specialised in Public Relations and Advertising.



Kate
Midttun

MEPRA Secretary Nominee

Kate Midttun is Managing Director and Strategic Marketing Lead at Acorn Strategy. She has a Bachelors Degree in Business (Marketing and Public Relations) from Queensland University of Technology, Australia and has just completed her Masters in Business Administration (Marketing and International Business Strategy).

Kate has over 13 years experience in Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and United Arab Emirates; demonstrated success in creating impactful strategies and programmes. Other applications include strategic marketing consulting, establishing processes and achieving quantifiable business results for a wide variety of boutique brands through to major international destinations. With a specialisation in destination marketing, Kate has deep sector knowledge across the real estate, leisure, hospitality and sports industries.

She has consulted and worked for a number of global brands both abroad and in the UAE, including: Mubadala, Miral Asset Management for Yas Island (Executive Affairs Authority, Abu Dhabi), Oman Arab Bank, Hilton Worldwide, Viceroy Hotel Group, Business In Sport and Leisure, amongst others.

MEPRA Executive Board Nominee



Ghaleb
Zeidan

With over 17 years' experience in media and public relations, Ghaleb heads up Weber Shandwick UAE. He joined the agency in 2010 and brings expertise in consumer, corporate, financial and government communications, as well as employee engagement, speaker training and issues and crisis management. His sector expertise includes aviation, education, energy, finance, healthcare and tourism.

Client experience includes the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi, Qasr Al Watan, the World Health Organization (WHO) and Yas Island, in addition to several NGOs. He provided senior counsel to numerous mergers in the region.

Currently, Ghaleb provides counsel to a range of local and federal government clients, including TikTok, Uber, Gulf Business Machines, UBF, FAB, SCAD, and the UAE Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Before joining the agency, Ghaleb managed a client portfolio that included Air Arabia, Aramex, Dubai Bank, Dubai Financial Market, Dubai Islamic Bank and SEDDCO.

Ghaleb holds a Diploma in Diplomatic and International Relations from the Beirut Arab University and a BA in Political and Administrative Science from the Lebanese University in Beirut. He is fluent in Arabic and English. Ghaleb was named 'PR Leader of the Year' at the 2019 PRCA MENA Awards.



MEPRA



**2021 MEPRA
Strategy Board Nominees**



Noura
Al Sarraj

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

With over 16 years of experience in strategic communications, reputation building and executive training, Noura heads the Abu Dhabi Weber Shandwick office. Noura holds specific expertise in consumer marcomms, corporate reputation, destination marketing, issues management & crisis communications, reputation management and senior executive coaching.

During her time at the agency, Noura has led strategic communications programmes for clients across a range of areas, including environment, healthcare, entertainment and real estate, at the MENA, European, and international levels. Noura's client experience includes UAE Ministry of Culture & Knowledge Development, the Department of Health - Abu Dhabi, Department of Tourism and Culture - Abu Dhabi, the Executive Affairs Authority, Tawazun, Farah Experiences, Abu Dhabi Investment Office, Statistics Centre Abu Dhabi, Emirates Nature-WWF and Yas Theme Parks and Attractions.

Noura is an Advisory Board Member for the Mass Communication Program at the College of Arts & Sciences in Abu Dhabi University, is a regular guest speaker at Zayed University, and is a working committee member for the Arab Business Group, which is leading efforts to draft and implement gender un-stereotyping codes in advertising.

Noura holds a BComms in Marketing and International Business from Concordia University in Canada with additional training from the US Department of State's MEPI program and the Berlin School of Creative Leadership's MCN Transformers Program. She is fluent in Arabic and English.



Joyce
Baz

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Joyce Baz is the Head of Communications for Google in the Middle East & North Africa. Joyce has thirteen years of experience in PR and Communications across the MENA region, with a large focus on tech, media and broadcast.

Joyce joined Google in 2013, where she's been leading Google and YouTube's regional communications efforts across corporate, consumer and B2B.

Before Google, Joyce was a PR manager at MBC Group and Al Arabiya news channel. Previous to that, Joyce was at MS&L where she managed a portfolio of PR accounts, namely CNN International.

Joyce holds a Masters Degree in Social Psychology from the London School of Economics & Political Science and has published a dissertation on 'how millennials view their privacy on social media'. Joyce holds an undergraduate degree in Business & Marketing from the American University in Beirut.



Geoff
Beattie

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

A global communications consultant who has advised some of the world's biggest organisations on strategy and crisis management over the past 20 years including in Saudi Arabia and the UAE, Geoff Beattie is the Executive Vice President – Regional Operations at ASDA'A BCW.

Based in Dubai, he is responsible for driving growth of the organisation across key markets in the region, especially as governments and business leaders in the region pivot to the new reality with a focus on organisational purpose and value creation.

Geoff joined ASDA'A BCW from BCW (Burson, Cohn & Wolfe), where he was Managing Director of Crisis & Issues Management in North America, a position he held since August 2019. Before BCW, Geoff spent two years as senior advisor to the Minister of Media in Saudi Arabia, helping the Kingdom to manage issues of global significance, and setting up the Center for International Communication (cic.org.sa). From 2016-17, Geoff worked with the incoming CEO and senior management of ADNOC, devising and implementing a communications strategy to support the complete restructuring of the business. He has also advised Shell and ExxonMobil on major crises and global issues.

One of Geoff's most notable achievements was to devise a global communications strategy for the Asia Pulp & Paper Group (APP) of Indonesia (2010-14), which resulted in a long-term Sustainability Roadmap for the company and a groundbreaking commitment to protect the Indonesian rainforest, in partnership with Greenpeace and other leading NGOs.

Geoff is recognised as an innovative thinker in the communications industry, having devised and launched Cohn & Wolfe's award-winning 'Authentic Brands' series in 2013. His professional background is in television and newspaper journalism in the UK, and he has continued to write newspaper columns. Geoff is also a Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts (FRSA) in London.



Maria
Cohn

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Maria Cohn is a Managing Director at FTI Consulting's Strategic Communications segment in the UAE, where she currently heads the Public Affairs and Government Relations practice for the Middle East. She also oversees coordination of FTI's affiliates across the Middle East and Africa. Combining her international expertise on public affairs, government relations, and reputation management, Maria works with companies facing legislative and regulatory pressure across different markets to develop multi-country and global strategies to manage and mitigate regulatory, political, and reputational risks.

Before moving to the UAE in 2015, Maria spent 7 years in Brussels, where she was leading the EU public affairs and political communications strategies for a number of international companies. During her time in Brussels, Maria also managed the secretariats of several European associations and industry platforms.

Prior to moving to Brussels, Maria worked as an International Trade consultant at the Economic & Commercial Office of the Spanish Embassy in Stockholm supporting Spanish companies seeking to export to or establish operations in Sweden and Latvia.

A German / Spanish national, Maria holds a Master's degree in International Relations from the University of Kent (UK).



Ben
Curson

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Ben Curson is a senior corporate issues and crisis management consultant, with long-standing experience in communications across a wide range of sectors and geographies, including living and working in the Gulf region.

He has particular experience of working with global businesses and managing communications across multiple markets. He provides strategic counsel to senior executives of UK and global companies and institutions, and leads Kekst CNC's EMEA crisis and cyber work.

Having worked as a broadcast journalist and press officer at the Co-operative Group, Ben has subsequently spent most of his career in consultancy, firstly as a Partner at Penrose Financial and then as Group Managing Director at H+K Strategies in London. Prior to joining Kekst CNC, Ben was Managing Partner at Instinctif Partners responsible for the Corporate and Financial Services teams. Ben is a regular speaker at conferences and events on crisis and cyber communications issues.



Heba
Fatani

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

In her role as Director General of Ras Al Khaimah Government Media Office (RAKGMO), Ms. Heba Fatani oversees the media and communications strategy for the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah. RAKGMO's comprehensive remit entails managing the media affairs of His Highness Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, UAE Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah, in addition to highlighting Ras Al Khaimah's numerous achievements, objectively reporting its activities, promoting its advantages as a place to live and work and formulating communication policies that aid its development goals. The Office also manages relationships and coordination between the Government of Ras Al Khaimah and local and international media.

Providing astute leadership, Ms. Fatani ensures that RAKGMO fulfills its mandate to improve Ras Al Khaimah's positioning regionally and globally and ensures that its successes are accurately and clearly promulgated to a wide audience, taking into consideration the Emirate's strategic vision and goal to attract investment and tourists.

Ms. Fatani brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in high-level government and corporate communications to RAKGMO. Prior to taking up her position, she was Senior Executive Manager of Corporate Communications for Kingdom Holding Company (Saudi Arabia) - one of the world's largest and most diversified public investment companies. Here she directed communications for both the company and its founder, Prince Al-Waleed bin Talal bin Abdulaziz, investor, philanthropist, member of the Saudi royal family and a person listed by Time magazine as one of the hundred most influential people in the world.

Ms. Fatani moves easily between the business worlds of East and West, participating in numerous global events with a view to shedding light on the many achievements of Ras Al Khaimah and with special emphasis on the dynamic and proactive role that His Highness Sheikh Saud plays in the United Arab Emirates and, increasingly, around the world.



Teri
O'Donnell

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Teri is a leading reputation management specialist with over twenty years' global experience. Teri co-founded Manara Global in March 2019 with Robin Gordon-Farleigh, a veteran of the UK Government who worked at Number 10 Downing Street advising two UK Prime Ministers.

Throughout Teri's career she has had the pleasure of working in a strategic advisory capacity for range of clients across the full spectrum of 'purpose-led' marketing and communications – insight and planning, executive positioning and training, narrative development and messaging, brand identity and architecture, culture and values consultancy, communications strategy and infrastructure development.

Previously, as partner at Freuds London, Teri counseled founders and boards belonging to some of the world's biggest and most established businesses and brands – both public and private, across a range of industries; professional services, oil and gas, technology, energy, food and beverage, health and well-being. Teri worked with leaders who have had the ambition and commitment to make a positive difference on the world around us and she has successfully counseled and partnered with some of the world's leading CEOs, founders, High Net Worth Individuals and Family Offices in personal reputation building.

With a career spanning the globe from New Zealand to London, to the Middle East via the USA, Teri's broad worldview, optimism and dedication is the key to her ability to always expand the possibilities for her clients, and deliver beyond their expectations.

Most recently Teri has been Managing Director in the Middle East for a global communications agency, working on business and government clients. Teri is on the Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) strategy board, is on the board of Global Women in Public Relations (GWPW) MENA and is a committed professional mentor.



Kiera
Purdue

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Kiera Purdue is Managing Partner of StickyGinger – a creative communications agency with offices in Dubai and Riyadh. Studying English Language and Literature at Manchester University led her into the field of advertising, as part of the Graduate Placement scheme at McCann Erickson Manchester where she worked in Client Servicing for 2 years. Moving as an Account Manager to BJL, an independent advertising agency in Manchester, Kiera spent 3 years working on flagship accounts across industries before moving to Dubai in 2006.

Kiera's one and only agency role in Dubai was as Account Director at Saatchi & Saatchi working on accounts such as MAF and Marriott, before setting up StickyGinger in 2008, with her business partner, Lucy Freeman. Kiera's role as both partner and New Business Development, as well as the legal and financial lead in agency has allowed her to expand her experience both as an owner, as well as a communications specialist – now leading a team of 18 across Dubai, Riyadh and London – delivering across PR, Social, Digital, Insights and Creative for the MENA region.



Ananda
Shakespeare

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Ananda Shakespeare has enjoyed a career as a magazine editor, journalist and PR professional spanning more than 20 years.

Her depth of experience expands to lifestyle, business, property and esoteric subjects too. She has worked with most of the leading publications in the UAE, both editorially and as a PR professional.

Career highlights include compiling numerous one-off books for the Time Out empire in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and GCC including Time Out Doha and working with Ideal Home and International Wristwatch magazines in the UK. Her meticulous eye for detail was tested and proven when she worked for five years as a sub-editor for MEED, Middle East Economic Digest), one of the oldest and most respected business titles in the region. Her early career included a period of employment with the UK's BBC Radio 4.

A relentless networker and people person, Ananda adopts a deeply personal and hands-on approach to her clients, with industry experience spanning work with BourneRiver PR, UK Gold and PolyGram.

Ananda Shakespeare is a member of the PRCA (Public Relations & Communications Association) of the UK and UAE and the Middle East PR Association (MEPRA).



Jonty
Summers

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Jonty Summers is Managing Director of Hanover Middle East. He advises senior management of government entities, listed companies and international organisations on leadership communications, reputational issues and corporate positioning. He has advised companies in a range of sectors including healthcare, industrials, technology, real estate, investment management and private equity. A former journalist with more than 20 years' experience, Jonty moved to the UAE in 2009.

High-profile work of note includes communications management of the MERS Coronavirus crisis for the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 2014 and advising Abu Dhabi-based Aldar Properties on the communications aspects of its merger with Sorouh Real Estate in 2013.

He is an experienced executive presentation and media coach and speech writer, working with Government ministers, CEOs and management teams, and has acted as a facilitator and panel chairman at a number of leading GCC conferences. He has also lectured at London Business School.

Jonty graduated with a BA Honours degree in European Studies from the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom and also received a diploma in Scandinavian Studies from the University of Odense in Denmark. He is a Certified Investor Relations Officer of the Middle East Investor Relations Society. He speaks French and Danish and elementary Arabic.



Dana
Tahir

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Dana is a Public Relations expert with over fourteen years of experience, which started in 2006 when she joined MS&L as a Communication Executive, before moving to Havas PR (EURO RSCG back then), where over the years, she grew into Head of Communication for the Consumer Division. As one of the very first members of Havas PR, and during her whole tenure, Dana was involved in all aspects of the agency's operations.

Recognized for brand building, strategic counsel, crisis management and know-how, she has successfully led the agency's post-digital transformation allowing it to expand its footprint across industries in digital and social media. In 2019 she has been appointed as GM. She currently oversees both the Consumer and Corporate Divisions, where she has successfully expanded the agency's portfolio including its diversification into brands outside the group.



Lisa
Welsh

MEPRA Strategy Board Nominee

Lisa is the Managing Director, Regional Operations across the METIA region. With a focus on Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain, Lisa works with the in-market teams to provide strategic, regional communications support through planning, creative campaign development and delivering high quality implementation. Lisa was listed as one of the world's most influential PR professionals in the 2016 PR Week Global Power Book.

Previously the General Manager of Hill+Knowlton Strategies in the UAE, Lisa ran the Dubai and Abu Dhabi offices leading a team of over 70 people. Prior to this role she also set up and led the firm's Health+Wellness Practice across the Middle East and Africa. Lisa's deep pharmaceutical sector knowledge and extensive industry contacts have seen her advise many leading global brands including Pfizer, Roche, Coca-Cola and GlaxoSmithKline, among others. Drawing on more than 15 years of international communications experience, Lisa adopts a multi-faceted campaign approach to assignments which have ranged from regulatory issues management to market entry and influencer engagement to prepare for new drug introductions.

Outside of healthcare, Lisa has rich and varied experienced both in-house and with international communications firms. She joined H+K in 2011 from electronics giant Toshiba where she was PR Director for the Middle East, Africa, Turkey, CIS & Baltics. There she focused primarily on media and analyst relations, events management, and issues and crisis management.

Lisa holds an upper second BA Hons in Public Relations from the University of Central Lancashire and is an active member of both the Middle East PR Association (MEPRA) and the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR).